

BEWARE OF TONY CAMPOLO

Updated July 4, 2008 (first published March 5, 2008) (David Cloud, Fundamental Baptist Information Service, P.O. Box 610368, Port Huron, MI 48061, 866-295-4143, fbns@wayoflife.org; for instructions about subscribing and unsubscribing or changing addresses, see the information paragraph at the end of the article) -

Tony Campolo is a popular “evangelical” speaker and author. He is professor emeritus of Sociology at Eastern University and an ordained minister in the liberal American Baptist Convention. According to *Wikipedia*, he currently serves as an associate pastor of the Mount Carmel Baptist Church in West Philadelphia, whereas his wife attends Central Baptist Church in Wayne, Pennsylvania. In an interview with me at the New Baptist Covenant Celebration in Atlanta in January 2008, he confirmed that he and his wife attend different churches.

Campolo is associated with the emerging church. For example, he co-authored *Adventures in Missing the Point* with Brian McLaren. McLaren also endorsed Campolo’s book *Speaking My Mind: The Radical Evangelical Prophet Tackles the Tough Issues Christians Are Afraid to Face* (2004).

Campolo is a master entertainer. No doubt about it. Of course, that is the kind of speaker who is popular in this confused, carnal hour. Campolo is dynamic, interesting, and personable. He appeals to the young and to the old. He can make you laugh, and he can make you cry. He is full of zeal. He can move people. But Campolo is a dangerous man because of his aberrant theology.

A “GRADUAL” SALVATION EXPERIENCE

In *Letters to a Young Evangelical* Campolo described his own salvation experience in the following words:

“When I was a boy growing up in a lower-middle-class neighborhood in West Philadelphia, my mother, a convert to Evangelical Christianity from a Catholic Italian immigrant family, hoped I would have one of those dramatic ‘born-again’ experiences. That was the way she had come into a personal relationship with Christ. She took me to hear one evangelist after another, praying that I would go to the altar and come away ‘converted.’ BUT IT NEVER WORKED FOR ME. I would go down the aisle as the people around me sang ‘the invitation hymn,’ but I just didn’t feel as if anything happened to me. For a while I despaired, wondering if I would ever get ‘saved.’ It took me quite some time to realize that entering into a personal relationship with Christ DOES NOT ALWAYS HAPPEN THAT WAY. ...

“In my case INTIMACY WITH CHRIST WAS DEVELOPED GRADUALLY OVER THE YEARS, primarily through what Catholic mystics call ‘centering prayer.’ Each morning, as soon as I wake up, I take time--sometimes as much as a half hour--to center myself on Jesus. I say his

name over and over again to drive back the 101 things that begin to clutter up my mind the minute I open my eyes. Jesus is my mantra, as some would say. ...

“I learned about this way of having a born-again experience from reading the Catholic mystics, especially *The Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius of Loyola. ...

“After the Reformation, we Protestants left behind much that was troubling about Roman Catholicism of the fifteenth century. I am convinced that we left too much behind. The methods of praying employed by the likes of Ignatius have become precious to me. With the help of some Catholic saints, my prayer life has deepened” (*Letters to a Young Evangelical*, 2006, pp. 25, 26, 30, 31).

This is very a very frightful testimony. Campolo does not have a biblical testimony of salvation. He plainly admits that is not “born again” in the way that his mother was, through a dramatic biblical-style conversion. Instead, he describes his “intimacy with Christ” as something that has developed gradually through the practice of Catholic mysticism.

For one thing, this is to confuse salvation with spiritual growth. The conversions that are recorded in the New Testament are of the instantaneous, dramatic variety. We think of the woman at the well (John 4), and Zacchaeus (Luke 19), and the Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8), and Paul (Acts 9), and Cornelius (Acts 10), and Lydia (Acts 16), and the Philippian jailer (Acts 16), to name a few. The Lord Jesus Christ said that salvation is a birth (John 3:3). That is not a gradual thing that happens throughout one’s life; it is an event!

Further, Catholic mysticism itself is unscriptural. Jesus forbade repetitious prayers (Mat. 6:7). He taught us to pray in a verbal, conscious manner, talking with God as with a Father, addressing God the Father external to us, not searching for a mystical oneness with God in the center of one’s being through thoughtless meditation (Mat. 6:9-13).

Campolo’s testimony is more akin to the Roman Catholicism that his mother was saved out of. It is repeating mantras and doing good works and progressing in spirituality. Campolo clearly attributes his “spirituality” to Catholic-style mysticism. He even speaks in terms of experiencing “oneness with God” and entering a “thin place” wherein God “is able to break through and envelop the soul.”

“The constant repetition of his name clears my head of everything but the awareness of his presence. By driving back all other concerns, I am able to create what the ancient Celtic Christians called ‘THE THIN PLACE.’ The thin place is that spiritual condition wherein the separation between the self and God becomes so thin that God is able to break through and envelop the soul. ... Like most Catholic mystics, [Loyola] developed an intense desire to experience A ‘ONENESS’ WITH GOD” (*Letters to a Young Evangelical*, pp. 26, 30).

Roger Oakland observes:

“This term ‘thin place’ originated with Celtic spirituality (i.e., contemplative) and is in line with panentheism. ... Thin places imply that God is in all things, and the gap between God, evil, man, everything thins out and ultimately disappears in mediation” (*Faith Undone*, pp. 114, 115).

I suspect that Campolo’s many heresies are largely the product of his unscriptural mystical practices which have brought him into intimate communion with something other than the Jesus Christ of the Bible.

A SHAM EVANGELICAL “TRIAL”

After Campolo published the book *A Reasonable Faith* some evangelical leaders became concerned that he was teaching universalism. Campolo developed the idea that “Christ lives in all human beings, regardless of whether they are Christians.” He asserted that the resurrected Jesus of history is “actually is present” in each person and said, “Jesus is the only Savior, but not everybody who is being saved by Him is aware that He is the one who is doing the saving.”

When Campus Crusade for Christ and Youth for Christ cancelled Campolo’s speaking engagement at Youth Congress ‘85, the Christian Legal Society organized a “reconciliation panel” let by J.I. Packer.

After examining the book and questioning Campolo the panel came to the amazing conclusion that though his statements were “methodologically naïve and verbally incautious.” *Christianity Today* editor Kenneth Kantzer wrote that Campolo was entirely orthodox.

Campolo told *Christianity Today*,

“I’m worried that evangelical intellectuals will not say anything except the old phrases and the old worn out terminology ... The way evangelical Christianity is doing theology really bothers me. If everybody has to say only things that they know are safely orthodox, if we lose the capacity to be open and to share ideas that people may consider heretical, I think we will lose our creativity.”

This is a foolish statement, and for *Christianity Today* to leave it unchallenged is inexcusable. To call for a questioning of the “old worn out terminology,” and for theological openness to new theology is the apostasy described in 2 Timothy 4. “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.”

Today’s evangelical leaders do not have the heart nor the spiritual discernment needed to protect the flock of God. They are blind guides and dumb dogs. *Christianity Today*’s defense of Campolo does not demonstrate his orthodoxy, it demonstrates *Christianity Today*’s confusion.

Campolo complained that he was being persecuted, even though the theological watchdogs turned out to be pussycats.

On the authority of God's Word, we say that Campolo was a heretic in 1985 and since then he has proceeded from heresy to heresy, yet he is still accepted as an "evangelical theologian."

CAMPOLO BELIEVES IN EVOLUTION

When Campolo was examined by the evangelical leaders in 1985, they noted that "while he accepts an evolutionary view of the origin of man and the universe, he holds that this is consistent with Scripture that teaches only the fact (not the method) of Creation" (*Christian News*, Sept. 23, 1985).

Christianity Today did not see this as a serious problem because they allow room for all sorts of doctrinal error, but it is a very serious matter.

It should be obvious even to a child that the Bible teaches not only the fact of creation, but the method, as well. The Bible plainly teaches that the world was created by God in six days and six nights. There is no room for any sort of evolutionary thinking here, and to allow men such as Campolo to hold such views is folly. The doctrine of special creation is the only view that reveals the nature of man as distinct from the animals and that explains the literal fall of man in a literal Garden of Eden. If there were no literal creation and fall, the atonement of Christ on the cross is without meaning.

CAMPOLO DOESN'T BELIEVE THAT THE BIBLE IS INERRANTLY INSPIRED

In an interview with Shane Claiborne in 2005, Campolo was asked to define "evangelical." He replied:

"An evangelical is someone who believes the doctrines of the Apostle's Creed. That outlines exactly what we believe in detail. Secondly, an evangelical has a very high view of scripture **THOUGH NOT NECESSARILY INERRANCY**. And the third thing--we believe that salvation comes by being personally involved with a living resurrected Jesus. So I've defined evangelical in those three terms. There is a doctrinal statement, so that there is some content to what we believe. There is a source of truth, Scripture. And there is a personal relationship with Jesus" ("On Evangelicals and Interfaith Cooperation," Shane Claiborne interview with Tony Campolo, *Crosscurrents*, Spring 2005, http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m2096/is_1_55/ai_n13798048).

Campolo's doctrinal statement is not only exceedingly weak, shallow, vague, and confusing, but it is heretical as well! Further, defining salvation as "being personally involved with a living resurrected Jesus" allows for a world of heresy. It allows for an Orthodox sacramental gospel, a Roman Catholic mystical gospel, a Church of Christ baptismal regeneration gospel, you name it.

In his book *Partly Right*, Campolo said:

“Abraham’s knowledge of God fit no theological system. It complied with no dictates of knowledge. ... [Kierkegaard] rejected the bibliolatry of those fundamentalists who would make the Scriptures the ultimate authority for faith. Even though he would agree with those who hold to the doctrine of the inerrancy of Scriptures, he refused to put the Bible in a higher place of authority than the inward encounter with God” (p. 99).

Thus, Campolo holds to the heresy that the Bible is not the ultimate authority for faith and practice and exalts the liberal-mystical idea that an inward encounter with God is a higher authority than the Bible. He does not explain how it is possible to test the genuineness of an “inward encounter with God” apart from the Bible and fails to acknowledge that “faith” is not a leap in the dark but that “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God” (Romans 10:17).

CAMPOLO IS AN ECUMENIST

I attended Missionsfest ‘92 in Vancouver, British Columbia, to hear Campolo speak. Though the participants represented a wide variety of belief and practice, most came under the evangelical label. There were Pentecostals, Baptists, Presbyterians, Mennonites, Anglicans, Lutherans, to name a few. I did not see any Catholic groups, though some of the people we talked to at the booths were strongly sympathetic toward Catholicism.

Campolo spoke on Friday evening to a standing-room-only crowd, and he literally brought the people to their feet. The man is a very effective speaker, which of course makes him all the more dangerous.

He began his talk by noting how incredible and wonderful it was that so many different kinds of Christians had come together for the meeting. He mentioned Pentecostals, Baptists, Presbyterians, Anglicans, and Mennonites.

As Campolo stood before this mixed multitude, he did not have one word of warning about the false teaching represented by the various groups that were present. He did say, “If your theology is not right you will be messed up and not be able to follow Jesus adequately.” But he did not explain what he meant, and of course he gave no examples of being “messed up theologically.” He appealed to the people to give themselves to world missions, and he made no exceptions for those who hold to false doctrine.

Not only did Campolo approach this conference in a compromising ecumenical spirit, he did not even clarify the Gospel. He mentioned the Gospel; he referred to the Gospel. But he did not explain what the Gospel is. He did not preach the Gospel. He talked about “giving your life to Jesus Christ,” but that is not the Gospel. He spoke of the necessity of winning people to Jesus

Christ, and he said that “missions starts with the declaration that Jesus Christ must be the Lord of your life.” But that is not the Gospel. That kind of language is interpreted many different ways by the various denominations. Campolo said, “I believe in heaven, and I believe in hell.” But that is not the Gospel. He mentioned the cross, but the cross must be explained. Especially is this true in this hour of doctrinal confusion. Even Rome mentions the cross, but Rome, of course, does not preach the biblical gospel.

All of this is not surprising in light of the ecumenism of the conference. If Campolo had preached a clear Gospel, he would have caused problems for some of the participants. He would have caused divisions. He could not preach against baptismal regeneration, because this was held by many of the Lutherans and Anglicans who were present. He could not preach against the heresy of losing your salvation, because this was held by many of the Pentecostals present. Ecumenists speak in generalities and inferences, not in plain doctrinal Bible language. They do not reprove and rebuke (2 Timothy 4:2).

Ecumenism has long been Campolo’s methodology. His American Baptist Convention is the most liberal group of Baptists in the United States and is a member body of the World Council of Churches. Bible-believing Baptist churches long ago separated from this modernistic group.

You can find Campolo practically anywhere--preaching the same ecumenically-popular message: You can find him in a National Council of Churches meeting (he spoke at the NCC-sponsored “A Gathering of Christians,” May 1988, in Arlington, Texas), and you can find him at a National Association of Evangelicals meeting (Campolo spoke at NAE’s annual convention, March 1987, in Wheaton, Illinois). Any lip service Campolo gives to the importance of doctrinal correctness is negated by his constant fellowship with heretics. In practice, the man has no concern for doctrinal purity.

Campolo signed an article in the liberal *Sojourners* magazine in May 1981, which lambasted the United States and stated that Roman Catholicism was the one bright light in the dark situation in El Salvador.

Campolo was on the editorial board for the production of the film *Mother Teresa*, which exalted the Roman Catholic nun and contained no warning about her false gospel. Campolo often uses Mother Teresa as an example of biblical Christianity, though she preached a false gospel, believed that all men are children of God, worshiped the wafer of the mass, and prayed to Mary.

Campolo has spoken at self-esteem guru Robert Schuller’s Institute for Church Growth. In 2001 he joined hands with Catholic priest Michael Moynihan at this Institute.

Campolo referred positively to Seventh-day Adventism in his book *20 Hot Potatoes Christians Are Afraid to Touch* (chapter 3).

Campolo is exceedingly dangerous because he is an ecumenist who is willing to work with and fellowship with error. He refuses to obey Bible separation. He refuses to lift his voice against heresy. In fact, he often pokes fun at the fundamentalist position. This is wickedness. It is impossible to please God while preaching the kind of positive ecumenical message that Campolo preaches.

CAMPOLO DESCRIBES MAN AS DIVINE

In his 1985 book *Partly Right*, Campolo used the word “divinity” seven times in one chapter to refer to man. He made the following statements:

“[Robert Schuller] never lets us forget that WE HAVE A DIVINITY ABOUT US and that as sons and daughters of God we are capable of great things. ... [Schuller] affirms OUR DIVINITY, yet does not deny our humanity ... Isn’t God’s message to sinful humanity that HE SEES IN EACH OF US A DIVINE NATURE of such worth that He sacrificed His own Son? ... [Christ] was aware of the filthy side of Mary and her sisters in the world’s oldest profession, but He also saw THEIR DIVINITY” (*Partly Right*, pp, 118, 119).

Man is made in God’s image, but he is never described as divine in Scripture. Christ did not teach that man is divine. He told the unsaved Pharisees that they were of their father the devil (John 8:44). It is confusion to describe man in such unbiblical terms.

CAMPOLO BELIEVES NON-CHRISTIANS MIGHT GO TO HEAVEN

In a letter to Jerry Falwell that was printed in the *National Liberty Journal*, August 9, 1999, Campolo said that Romans 2:14-16 “suggests that the work of Christ on the cross may be broader than some of us think.” He quoted Billy Graham as saying that “on Judgment Day, there may be people who enter the Kingdom who have not called themselves Christians.” Campolo stood by his statement on *The Charlie Rose Show*: “I am not convinced that Jesus only lives in Christians” (*Calvary Contender*, October 1, 1999).

In January 2007, Campolo told the *Edmonton Journal* (Alberta, Canada) that he is not sure who will go to heaven. Asked by the paper, “Do you believe non-Christians can go to heaven?” Campolo replied: “That’s a good question to ask because the way we stand is we contend that trusting in Jesus is the way to heaven. However, we do not know who Jesus will bring into the kingdom and who He will not. We are very, very careful about pronouncing judgment on anybody. We leave judgment in the hands of God and we are saying Jesus is the way. We preach Jesus, but we have no way of knowing to whom the grace of God is extended” (“Canada’s Different Evangelicals,” *Edmonton Journal*, Jan. 27, 2007).

This is contradictory gobbly-gook! If we believe that “trusting Jesus is the way to heaven,” then we most definitely DO know who Jesus will bring into the kingdom. He will bring those that trust Him and He will not bring those that do not trust Him. As for pronouncing judgment on

people, it is not our judgment. It is God in His infallible Word who has stated such things as, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:16), and, “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him,” (John 3:36), and, “He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life” (1 John 5:12).

To say that we have no way of knowing who Jesus will bring into the kingdom is to play the religious politician and to deny the plain teaching of Scripture. God has already told us, Mr. Campolo! “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him” (John 3:36). Words could not be plainer! The unbeliever does not have to wait until he dies to find out whether or not he will go to heaven. The Bible says he is condemned already (John 3:18), dead in trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1), controlled by the Devil (Eph. 2:2), a child of wrath (Eph. 2:3), “having no hope, and without God in the world” (Eph. 2:12). Revelation 21:8 says the unbeliever will be outside of the eternal city of God.

In about 1996, in an interview with Bill Moyers broadcast on MSNBC, Campolo was asked about whether evangelicals should try to convert Jews. He replied:

“I am not about to pronounce who goes to heaven and who goes to hell. That is not within the realm of any of us. We are not here to declare who is out and who is in. All we are here to say is what is meaningful in our own lives, what has been significant in our own personal experience with God. I have come to know God through Jesus Christ. He is the only way that I know God. And so I preach Jesus, and I not about to make judgments about my Jewish brothers and my Muslim brothers and sisters. I’m just not about to make those kinds of statements. I think we ought to leave judgments up to God and we ought to call people to obedient faith in their own traditions, even as we faithfully preach out own faith to others. I learn about Jesus from other religions. They speak to me about Christ, as well” (<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=4117713232348817752>).

In an interview with Shane Claiborne in 2005, Campolo said: “Evangelicalism is heading for a split... There is going to be one segment of evangelicalism, just like there is one segment in Islam that is not going to be interested in dialogue. But there are other evangelicals who will want to talk and establish a common commitment to a goodness with Islamic people and Jewish people particularly” (“On Evangelicals and Interfaith Cooperation,” *Crosscurrents*, Spring 2005, http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m2096/is_1_55/ai_n13798048).

Claiborne then asked Campolo, “When we talk about inter-religious cooperation, does that mean that we need to stop trying to convert each other?” To which Campolo replied:

“We don’t have to give up trying to convert each other. What we have to do is show respect to one another. And to speak to each other with a sense that even if people don’t convert, they are God’s people, God loves them, and we do not make the judgment of who is going to heaven and who is going to hell. I think that what we all have to do is leave judgment up to God.”

If Muslims are already God's people, then why in the world should we try to "convert" them?

Campolo said further:

"I've got to believe that Jesus is the only Savior but being a Christian is not the only way to be saved. ... Now Muslims do not believe that Jesus died on the cross. So we have a difference there. We kid ourselves if we pretend that we all believe the same thing. What we have to do is say that we believe different things. But there is so much goodness in the Islamic community, it cannot be ignored. Those who write off Islamic people are making a serious mistake. ... I don't think you have to compromise as a Christian the belief that Jesus is the only Savior but what I do think we have to say is that the grace of God extends way beyond the limitations of my religious group. Our Muslim brothers and sisters can say Islam is the only true faith but we are not convinced that only Muslims enjoy salvation. I contend that there is no salvation apart from Jesus Christ, but I am not convinced that the grace of God does not go further than the Christian community."

This is exceedingly unscriptural thinking. If Jesus Christ is the only Saviour, then the grace of God extends precisely to those who are in Christ. Jesus IS the grace of God, and salvation is in Him and nowhere outside of Him. It is the sinner that believes on Christ that has eternal life; he that does not believe is condemned already (John 3:16-18). Ephesians 2 describes the condition of those who have not been regenerated. They are "dead in trespasses and sins" (v. 1). They walk according to their head, the devil (v. 2). They are "by nature the children of wrath" (v. 3). They are "without Christ ... having no hope, and without God in the world" (v. 12). They are "far off" (v. 13).

Later in the interview Claiborne said:

"Rarely are people converted by force or words, but through intimate encounters. Perhaps one of the best things we can do is stop talking with our mouths and cross the chasm between us with our lives. Maybe we will even find a mystical union of the Spirit as Francis did."

To this Campolo replied:

"Speaking of Francis [of Assisi], here's a wonderful story. I got to meet the head of the Franciscan order. I met him in Washington. He said let me tell you an interesting story. He told me about one of their gatherings, where they bring the brothers of the Franciscan order together for a time of fellowship. About eight years ago they held it in Thailand and out of courtesy, they really felt they needed to show some graciousness to the Buddhists, because they were in a Buddhist country. So they got Buddhist theologians together and Franciscan theologians together and sent them off for three days to talk and see if they could find common ground. They also took Buddhist and Franciscan monastics and sent them off together to pray with each other. On the fourth day they all reassembled. The theologians were fighting with each other, arguing with

each other, contending there was no common ground between them. The monastics that had gone off praying together, came back hugging each other. IN A MYSTICAL RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD, THERE IS A COMING TOGETHER OF PEOPLE WHERE THEOLOGY IS LEFT BEHIND AND IN THIS SPIRITUALITY THEY FOUND A COMMONALITY.

“It seems to me that when we listen to the Muslim mystics as they talk about Jesus and their love for Jesus, I must say, it’s a lot closer to New Testament Christianity than a lot of the Christians that I hear. In other words IF WE ARE LOOKING FOR COMMON GROUND, CAN WE FIND IT IN MYSTICAL SPIRITUALITY, EVEN IF WE CANNOT THEOLOGICALLY AGREE, Can we pray together in such a way that we connect with a God that transcends our theological differences?

“So we make sure we don’t compromise what we believe. But we also make sure that in mystical spirituality we find a kind of oneness that we leave judgment of who goes to heaven and who goes to hell in the hands of God and just preach the truth as we understand it” (“On Evangelicals and Interfaith Cooperation,” *Cross Currents*, Spring 2005).

Campolo exalts experience over doctrine. The reason that he can say that he doesn’t compromise what he believes even while claiming that Buddhist and Muslim mystics are in fellowship with God is that he doesn’t believe anything!

“He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. ... He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him” (John 3:18, 36).

CAMPOLO BELIEVES WE ARE BUILDING THE KINGDOM OF GOD TODAY

One of Campolo’s most serious errors is his confusion regarding the kingdom of God. He holds the popular “kingdom now” theology, which is sweeping through much of the evangelical/charismatic world. According to this thinking, the kingdom of God is something that is presently in this world. Campolo places the Bible promises for a future earthly kingdom into the context of this sin-cursed, apostate hour. Thus, Campolo challenges Christians to go into the world and to transform society.

In his message at Urbana ‘87, Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship’s annual youth meeting, Campolo said, “This night is a historical moment. This night God wants to raise up a generation of men and women who will enter into every sector of society as agents of change, transforming the world into the kind of world he wills it to be” (*Decision* magazine, Mar. 1988).

Campolo claims that believers are saved to change the world:

“Conversion is not basically so that you can go to heaven when you die. The purpose of conversion is so that you can go through the kind of personal transformation that will enable you to be a different kind of a person here on Earth and to become an instrument of God for changing the world” (“Evangelist seeks social justice, preaches conversion,” *Toledo Blade*, Aug. 2, 2003).

“[Jesus] saved us in order that He might begin to transform His world into the kind of world that He willed for it to be when He created it” (Campolo, *It's Friday but Sunday's Coming*, p. 106).

“Our call is to be God’s agents, to rescue not only the human race but the whole of creation” (Campolo, “Why Care for Creation,” *Tear Times*, Summer 1992).

Campolo claims that believers are commissioned to build the kingdom of God in this world, and he borrows his theology from all sorts of heretics to prove his point. In *How to Rescue the Earth without Worshiping Nature* (Thomas Nelson, 1992), he said: “If the Shalom of God and the peaceable kingdom of Isaiah 11 are to become real, then new ways of thinking must be established. With some help from St. Francis and Teilhard de Chardin, we just might make it” (p. 89). Thus he even borrows from Teilhard who worshipped a new age cosmic “christ.”

This is why Campolo says “the kingdom of God is a party.” That is the title of one of his books and is a theme that he brings into many of his messages. To prove this idea, Campolo quotes from the Bible’s references to such things as the Old Testament Jewish festivals and wrongly applies this to our time.

There is no hint in the New Testament that the apostles considered themselves agents of change in society. We don’t see them having a party. They gave their attention to preaching the Gospel and to building churches. They did not protest the problems of the Roman Empire. They did not start new businesses for the poor. They looked upon this present world as one under the imminent judgment of God and they did all they could to snatch brands from the fire, to get men saved before it is too late. Yet, as we shall see, Campolo actually makes fun of this type of thinking.

Campolo claims to believe in a future earthly kingdom of God that will be established when Christ returns, but his kingdom focus is definitely upon this present time. Chapter two of *The Kingdom of God Is a Party* is called “Signs of the Kingdom.” Campolo relates how he came up with the term “party” in relation to the kingdom of God. He first describes some popular ecumenical definitions of the kingdom of God. He mentions the Shalom concept of the World Council of Churches and the Jubilee concept of liberal social activists such as Ron Sider and John Yoder.

“During the 1950s, another biblical symbol or image came to the fore, as Christian leaders tried to find some new way to express God’s mission in the world and to explain that people like us are to have a part in it. Many main-denominational theologians, particularly those associated with the World Council of Churches, took hold of the concept of Shalom. ... Shalom was that

time when the lion and the lamb would lie down together, swords would be reshaped into plowshares, and war would be no more. ... The imagery provided by the word Shalom became a motif around which church leaders organized their activities. Building houses for poor people was done to contribute to Shalom. Fighting racism, supporting the peace movement, participating in efforts to save the environment--all were done to foster Shalom.

“Over the last few years, several neo-evangelical writers have made use of still another word to give expression to what they believe to be the purpose of the Christian mission. They have used the term ‘Jubilee.’ This symbol is especially useful for those who believe that the church should have a primary commitment to meet the needs of the poor and the oppressed. Writers such as Ron Sider and John Howard Yoder have made good use of the concept of Jubilee in their writings...”

Campolo’s only criticism of Shalom and Jubilee involves the difficulty of explaining these things.

“The main problem with this image, or symbol of the Christian mission, is that Jubilee, like the concept of Shalom, requires too much explanation to hammer home its meaning to most people. ... Something that will give a more immediate picture of what God wants to do in this world is needed. I have been groping for a word or image that can do that for us. ... The word is ‘party.’ The Kingdom of God is a party.”

It should be obvious that Campolo is focused on this world when he says the kingdom of God is a party.

Further, an entire chapter in this book is dedicated to an attempt to prove that it is God’s will for Christians to give ten percent of their income for worldly celebrations. This is based on a faulty application of Deuteronomy 14:22-29. Israel was to bring a tithe of the harvest to Jerusalem each year for a great festival. Campolo applies this directly to the hour in which we live.

In another chapter of the book Campolo applies kingdom work to efforts to solve the social problems of the world. Consider this quote:

“If ghetto kids in Philadelphia have little to celebrate because they have hovels for homes and live in the midst of gang violence, then we must do something to change all of that. If blacks in South Africa have to endure humiliation because of apartheid, then apartheid must be destroyed. If the Palestinians are denied human rights and are made into aliens in the very land in which they were born, then we must protest. If Catholics in Northern Ireland are made into second-class citizens by the Protestant majority, then we must work and pray for the restructuring of the Irish social system.” (pgs. 43,44)

It is obvious that Campolo’s focus is upon something that is foreign to the Bible for this present time.

For a refutation of this error, see the article “The Kingdom of God” at the Way of Life web site.

CAMPOLO HATES DISPENSATIONALISM AND REJECTS THE IMMINENT RETURN OF CHRIST

Campolo often pokes fun at fundamentalists who preach doom and gloom from a literal prophetic standpoint:

“Doomsayers at one time in America seemed limited to those who preached the fundamentalist gospel. Leaning on their Scofield Bibles, these preachers of the Word predicted an increasing tendency toward sin and decadence until that day when the world would be so bad that Jesus would have to return to put a stop to it all. There seemed to be a degree of satisfaction in any news that things in this world were falling apart. As they understood it, the faster this world went down the tubes, the more the Lord’s return would be hastened” (*The Kingdom of God Is a Party*, pp. 132,133).

Speaking at the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship’s annual meeting in June 2003, Campolo said:

“Instead of preaching against *Harry Potter* I suggest that you people who are preachers start preaching against those really hot sellers in the Christian community, those ‘Left Behind’ books. Nobody wants to say it. You are scared to attack the ‘Left Behind’ books which are false theology and unbiblical to the core. And it is about time you stand up and say so.

In the same sermon he called dispensationalism “a weird little form of fundamentalism that started like a hundred fifty years ago.” He also said, “That whole sense of the rapture, which may occur at any moment, is used as a device to oppose engagement with the principalities, the powers, the political and economic structures of our age” (“Opposition to women preachers evidence of demonic influence,” Baptist Press, June 27, 2003).

CAMPOLO AND THE HOMOSEXUAL ISSUE

Though Campolo believes homosexuality is unnatural, he also believes that homosexuals are usually born that way, that it is not a “volitional” issue, and they should be allowed to join churches and be ordained without renouncing homosexuality as such as long as they remain “celibate.”

Campolo’s wife, Peggy, “argues that the church’s traditional teaching on homosexuality is mistaken--just as the church’s traditional teaching on the role of women, slavery, and divorce is also mistaken” (Wikipedia, source: “Straight But Not Narrow,” keynote address, Evangelicals Concerned, Western Region 1994, audio cassette). Central Baptist Church in Wayne, Pennsylvania, where Peggy Campolo attends, is “an open and affirming congregation,” meaning that it accepts unrepentant practicing homosexuals as members.

In 2003 Campolo's wife spoke out in support of a homosexual American Baptist congregation that was starting in the Philadelphia area. The church, called Fusion Baptist Church, held its inaugural service on February 2. It was sponsored by Drexel Hill Baptist Church, another American Baptist congregation. Drexel Hill's female co-pastor, Jeri Williams, said that God told her, "Start a church downtown where they [homosexuals] could experience the love of Christ and be able to serve Him within the church context." Williams said she wants the new church to be a place where homosexuals can be safe and not judged.

Peggy Campolo is a national leader of the Association of Welcoming and Affirming Baptists, which urges Baptist congregations to be supportive of homosexuals.

Both women are very confused. God invites all sinners to be saved through faith in the blood of Christ, but He also commands them to repent of their sin. Churches should welcome homosexuals to hear the gospel, but they should also preach against the moral perversion of homosexuality and demand that church members give evidence of the new birth. "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such WERE some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor. 6:9-11).

When the Pacific Southwest region of the American Baptist Convention (ABC) voted on May 11, 2006, to withdraw from the parent denomination over the issue of homosexuality, Tony Campolo criticized them. The 300 churches in California, Hawaii, Nevada, and Arizona withdraw because of the denomination's acceptance of churches with lax policies on homosexuality ("Split among American Baptists," Baptist Press, May 18). Many American Baptist churches accept unrepentant homosexuals as members. Fifty-four ABC congregations are members of the Association of Welcoming and Affirming Baptists, which encourages the acceptance of homosexuality in Baptist churches. This Association "advocates for the full inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons within Baptist communities of faith."

Campolo criticized the withdrawal decision, saying that it "runs counter to the prayer of Christ that we might all be one people." Campolo was referring to Christ's high priestly prayer in John 17, but there is nothing in this prayer that would encourage unity between those who obey the Bible with those who do not. This prayer is for those who keep God's Word (Jn. 17:6, 8) and are sanctified through the truth (Jn. 17:19). The Lord Jesus prayed that God the Father would keep them from evil (Jn. 17:15). It is obvious that this is not a prayer for nominal Christians that so disregard the Scriptures that they accept homosexuality as a legitimate lifestyle.

CAMPOLO PROMOTES ROMAN CATHOLIC CONTEMPLATIVE PRACTICES

Tony Campolo co-authored a book with Mary Darling that promotes contemplative spirituality.

“We finally decided to use the term ‘mystical Christianity’ to distinguish the kind of spirituality we are advocating from other forms known in the Christian community. For instance, using the word mystical makes it clear that the Christian spirituality that we are discussing here is not to be confused with the kind used as a synonym for personal piety, which too often comes with destructive legalism, or scholastic Christianity, which can reduce faith to theological propositions. ... This book is about tapping into the love and reality that goes beyond what rules and reason alone can apprehend. We want to show how daily moments marked by mystical revelations of God’s love reveal the limits of propositional truth” (*The God of Intimacy and Action*, pp. 3, 4).

Campolo describes “supersaints” as “people who have been caught up into some mystical unity with God,” and he claims that Roman Catholic mystics such as Francis of Assisi, Ignatius of Loyola, Teresa of Avila, and Catherine of Siena, were supersaints that we should emulate (pp. 9, 10).

In true emerging church contradictory fashion Campolo says, “We must pay serious attention to mystical happenings, and discern, in the context of biblical understanding in Christian community, whether or not we believe they are of God. Discernment is crucial to mystical spirituality. Without it, anything goes. On the other hand, we must learn to doubt our doubts if we are going to be open to the work of the Spirit in our lives” (p. 11).

To “doubt our doubts” cancels out effective biblical discernment!

Campolo practices what he preaches. He says: “I get up in the morning a half hour before I have to and spend time in absolute stillness. I don’t ask God for anything. I just simply surrender to His presence and yield to the Spirit flowing into my life. ... An interviewer once asked Mother Teresa, ‘When you pray, what do you say to God?’ She said, ‘I don’t say anything. I just listen.’ So the interviewer asked, ‘What does God say to you?’ She replied, ‘God doesn’t say anything. He listens.’ That’s the kind of prayer I do in the morning. I empty myself and allow the Spirit to speak to me as Romans 8 says, ‘with groanings that cannot be uttered’” (*Outreach Magazine*, July/ August 2004, pp. 88, 89).

As we have seen in his 2005 interview with Shane Claiborne, Campolo sees contemplative mysticism as a means of interfaith unity.

In his book *Speaking My Mind* Campolo wrote:

“Beyond these models of reconciliation, a theology of mysticism provides some hope for common ground between Christianity and Islam. Both religions have within their histories examples of ecstatic union with God. ... I do not know what to make of the Muslim mystics, especially those who have come to be known as the Sufis. What do they experience in their

mystical experiences? Could they have encountered the same God we do in our Christian mysticism?" (pp. 149, 150).

CAMPOLO BELIEVES IN FEMALE CHURCH LEADERS

Campolo holds that women can preach. Toward the end of his message in Vancouver in 1992, Campolo said, "Are you suggesting women can preach? A lot better than most men! If they can preach in Africa, they can preach in Vancouver. That's what I say."

Campolo is one of the signers of a statement by Christians for Biblical Equality which affirms that "in the New Testament economy, women as well as men exercise the prophetic, priestly and royal functions," and "in the church, public recognition is given to both women and men who exercise ministries of service and leadership" (*Christian News*, Apr. 16, 1990).

In an interview with Laura Sheahen entitled "Evangelical Christianity Has Been Hijacked," published on *Beliefnet* in July 2004, Campolo said:

"I take issue, for instance, with the increasing tendency in the evangelical community to bar women from key leadership roles in the church. Over the last few years, the Southern Baptist Convention has taken away the right of women to be ordained to ministry. There were women that were ordained to ministry--their ordinations have been negated and women are told that this is not a place for them. They are not to be pastors. They point to certain passages in the Book of Timothy to make their case, but tend to ignore that there are other passages in the Bible that would raise very serious questions about that position and which, in fact, would legitimate women being in leadership positions in the church. ... We don't want to communicate the idea that to believe the Bible is to necessarily be opposed to women in key roles of leadership in the life of early Christendom."

In fact, Campolo says that those who say women are forbidden to be pastors are "of the devil." Speaking at the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship annual meeting on June 26, 2003, he mentioned groups such as the Southern Baptist Convention which prohibit women preachers and said:

"It's one thing to be wrong, but that isn't wrong, that's sinful. The Bible says, 'neglect not the gift that is in you,' and when women are gifted with the gift of preaching, anybody who frustrates that gift is an instrument of the devil" ("Campolo: Opposition to women preachers evidence of demonic influence," Baptist Press, June 27, 2003).

CAMPOLO SUGGESTS PRAYING TO PEOPLE

In the 2007 book *The God of Intimacy and Action: Reconnecting Ancient Spiritual Practices, Evangelism, and Justice*, which is co-written by Tony Campolo and Mary Albert Darling, we find the following heretical statement:

“While pointing out how important it is for Christians to pray for others, [Frank] Laubach makes a bold and intriguing proposal for another way of praying. He suggests that in addition to praying for someone in need of God, that we should consider praying to that person as well. He tells us that God may want to work through the praying Christian as a channel to reach into the heart and soul of the person who is in need of saving grace. Laubach proposes that a person who is resisting God might be open to the spiritual impact of a Christian concentrating God’s power on him or her. It is as though, according to Laubach, a praying Christian might be a lens through whom God focuses saving power into another person’s life. Call it a kind of mental telepathy, but what Laubach is suggesting is that the Holy Spirit flowing into a Christian, as a result of prayer, can stir up spiritual energy in that Christian that can then be directed toward a person who needs Christ’s salvation” (pp 34-35).

CAMPOLO IS VICIOUS IN HIS JUDGMENT OF FUNDAMENTALISTS

At the National Council of Churches “Gathering” in May 1988 Campolo said those who stand firm on absolutes and strongly resist error are doing the devil’s work (*Foundation* magazine, June 1988).

When Campolo spoke at the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship’s general assembly June 26, 2003, he lambasted fundamentalists, conservative Southern Baptists, and dispensationalists. He said that anyone who resists women pastors is an “instrument of the devil” and is committing sin. He said every Christian should support homosexuals as they “struggle for dignity.” He said that the perpetual cycle of violence in the Middle East is not the result of the Palestinians. He spoke of the “terrorism of the Israeli army” and criticized American military aid to Israel. He said *Harry Potter*, which is filled with witchcraft, as “good for kids to hear.” He said preachers should warn about dispensational theology and the doctrine of an imminent rapture. He spoke against Christians who do not support the United Nations.

CAMPOLO MAKES LIGHT OF SERIOUS THINGS

Throughout his speeches, Campolo makes light of frightfully serious things. In his speech in Vancouver in 1992, he made light of threatening people with death and hell in order to frighten them into being saved. He told of when he was a kid and was in church and the preacher tried to scare him like this. In his speech to the National Council of Churches meeting in 1988, Campolo said we should hold on to the King James Bible, because it uses “words like ‘imputed’ --that’s sexy!” He keeps his crowds laughing at such things.

This was the spirit that permeated Campolo’s message. , Campolo said, “We’ve got enough boring people in the ministry, we need people who can dance.” He called for Christians to “create a joyful celebration for a world that doesn’t know how to celebrate anymore.” According to Campolo, “The kingdom of God is a glorious and gigantic party!”

This is all foolishness. The hour in which we live cries for seriousness, for repentance, for mourning over sin. James 4 speaks of the kind of worldliness that has permeated evangelical Christendom. Missionsfest '92 evidenced this worldliness on every hand. There was rock music and the jungle beat everywhere. The evening youth meetings were nothing more than rock concerts. A great many of the women were dressed indecently. Only a handful of women wore dresses. Most had on tight pants. Some of the ushers were young women who were dressed revealingly in leotards and high boots with a jacket-like affair that came only to their buttocks. In the exhibit area, there were all sorts of worldly things for sale, such as T-shirts with weird artwork and mottos.

Listen to the James:

“Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God” (James 4:4).

What does James say about the worldly crowd? Does he say, “Hey, folks, laugh and clap and shout and dance; the Kingdom of God is a party, man! Be happy” That is Campolo’s message, but James says something quite the contrary to a worldly people:

“Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up” (James 4:8-10).

This is not the time to be laughing it up, folks, in the sense that Campolo is calling for. I praise the Lord for laughter, and I’m not calling for a ban on humor or fun; but the hour is one of deep apostasy, wickedness, and shallowness, and if Christ had spoken at Missionsfest '92 I am convinced He would have preached a message along the lines of James as quoted above.

Beware of Tony Campolo. He is a dangerous false teacher, all the more dangerous because he claims to believe that the Bible was given by divine inspiration and moves in “evangelical” circles. He is an enemy of Bible Christianity. The kingdom of God is not a Campolo-type of party.

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are from O Timothy magazine, which is in its 25th year of publication. Way of Life publishes many helpful books. The catalog is located at the web site: <http://www.wayoflife.org/catalog/catalog.htm> Way of Life Literature, P.O. Box 610368, Port Huron, MI 48061. 866-295-4143, fbns@wayoflife.org. We do not solicit funds from those who do not agree with our preaching and who are not helped by these publications, but from those who are. OFFERINGS can be made at <http://www.wayoflife.org/fbns/offering.html>. PAYPAL offerings can be made to <https://www.paypal.com/xclick/business=dcloud%40wayoflife.org>